Depot Town Rag

Volume 24, Number 8

October 2009

100% FREE *RAG* CONTENT

We saw it in the newspaper!

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

No *NEWS* is *bad* news

Where do we get our news now?

"Hear ye! Hear ye! Come out of your homes and stores and hear the news! This is the most reliable reportage you can expect today!"
-Colonial pamphleteer

"They can have my newspaper when they pry it from my cold, ink-stained fingers"
-T-shirt logo from popular gift catalog

"Ye gads! This miserable little six-page *Depot Town Rag* is now the only print medium left in town"
-Regular Rag Reader

"Well, there's always Rupert Murdoch."
-FoxNews fan

Final edition of *The Ann Arbor News*: Thursday, July 23, 2009

Laurel Champion, publisher: "… Putting out a daily print newspaper in this market is not a sustainable business. Over the last couple of years, we've made a lot of tough decisions to reduce our costs carefully and appropriately, even as we continued to suffer severe advertising losses.

"Unfortunately those cuts could not turn the course for us."

Ed Petykiewicz, editor: "…I love our profession and what we do. We have front row seats to history as it unfolds…

"…I wish it didn't have to end this way."

Local media goes online:

www.annarbor.com *"today in Ann Arbor"*

www.YpsiCiti.com *all Ypsilanti stuff*

www.depottown.org *this block since 2006*

PAPERLESS!

N.E.W.S. = North, East, West, South

Is our compass hopelessly broken?

It is hard to imagine a city without a daily newspaper. Ypsilantians rode the crest of the Golden Age of Journalism and witnessed its decline from their living room easy chairs. Now all of Washtenaw and Livingston Counties know what Depot Town felt like as it watched the decline of the railroads.

We could see it coming with each day's delivery of *The Ann Arbor News* the last year. Ypsilantians often recoiled at what they perceived as a condescending attitude from *The News'* coverage but, now that it's gone, we don't even get any bad news!

The News' editors kept that half-page crime map in place in every Friday issue for two months showing absolutely no crime in Ypsilanti after they closed their downtown Community News office on November 30, 2009. Readers wondered if their reporters had been in some way responsible for the criminal activity.

On March 21, 2009, *A² News* editor Ed Petykiewicz announced he was retiring. "He will likely stay on with the company through late spring or early summer," reported his newspaper.

The next day, March 22, 2009, radio and tv carried the news that *The News* was closing its doors in July.

It's been four months now since we've been paperless and many citizens have satisfied their news addictions by watching TV's talking heads hold up the front pages of other newspapers from around the country. It's not very satisfying to those who cannot eat without something to hold in our hands to read. Other than riboflavin and fiber reports, the backs of cereal boxes don't cover local issues very well.

Others have been satisfying their need to know via the Internet. *AnnArbor.com* (an on-line news medium) tries to fill the hole left by *The News'* hard copy. Content Editor Tony Dearing promises to cover Ypsi and Depot Town; he knows the beat from his days as editor of *The News'* Ypsilanti Bureau.

The *Ypsilanti Citizen* (www.YpsiCiti.com) started an on-line paper last year and readers who were new to higher tech were pleasantly surprised and pleased to see that it still uses a print format.

Local readers can still get their *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal,* but there's not much about Ypsilanti's City Council in there. And they seldom cover Depot Town' hoopla enough to satisfy most of the locals.

The most common complaint about the local daily paper was when it came late.

You can plug your ears to the news

-James Montgomery Flagg

James Montgomery Flagg may have been prescient; how could the famous illustrator have anticipated the iPod in 1930?

Garrison Keillor, from 21st Century Elements of Style

"…I know a man who is almost my age, and so he grew up with ink on his fingers and then, for reasons he couldn't explain, he switched over to reading online publications and checking out the *Times* and the *Washington Post* and *Slate*, and then found a website with streaming video in which a mature Austrian woman with braids tells you what to do. He sits, his eyes locked to hers, as she says, "You vill eat, mein little schweinhund," and upbraids him for imaginary transgressions. If he reaches for the "off" switch, she screeches at him and a rottweiler growls low in its throat and so he is a prisoner of his laptop, his day is shot. This sort of thing happens all the time. The Internet will eat you alive. With newspapers, you're in and out, twenty minutes. It's your life, you choose."

Tony Dearing, content editor for *AnnArbor.com*

"*The Ann Arbor News* was spending $2 million a year just for paper..." to an Ypsilanti morning coffee group on how an online publication can save on expenses.

Circulation through July 2009:

Ann Arbor News
44,833 daily
55,374 Sunday
Depot Town Rag
2,000 monthly

GOOD NEWS

Rupert Murdoch does not own *The Depot Town Rag* and it's not for sale. Other holdings by the Australian media giant include:

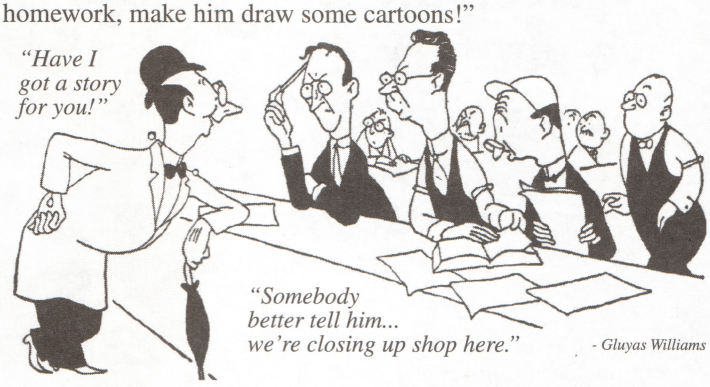
- *The N.Y. Post*
- *The London Times*
- *The Sydney Australian*
- TV Guide
- 20th Century Fox
- Madison Square Garden
- Fox News Channel
- Los Angeles Dodgers
- *The Wall Street Journal*

The *Depot Town Rag* is owned by the Depot Town Association, Inc., a nonprofit incorporation.

Awright, now: draw!

Raymond Lesser (The Future is Wow, *Funny Times*, April 2009) reports new opportunities in sustainable business and entrepreneurship:

"Other unusual [college] majors on the upswing include nanotechnology, computer forensics, and comic book art. That's right, while the sales of many print publications have collapsed, the market for comic books and graphic novels has grown 12 percent since 2006. So don't force your kid to finish his Latin or trigonometry homework, make him draw some cartoons!"



Gluyas Williams (whose work appears above) was one of America's most popular cartoonists between the World Wars. His specialty was gentle satire of big-city suburban life: commuter trains, cigar-wielding businessmen, meek husbands, women's clubs, sandlot ballplayers, and the like. In 1930, Williams worked at *The New Yorker* when he illustrated books for Robert Benchley.

There's always plenty of good news down in Depot Town!

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The Media Lives through Local Talent

Proofreading is a dying art, some say

A few modest examples from current publications

If Strike Isn't Settled Quickly, It May Last Awhile
Ya think?!

Panda Mating Fails; Veterinarian Takes Over
What a guy!

Police Begin Campaign to Run Down Jaywalkers
Now, that's taking things a bit far!

Juvenile Court to Try Shooting Defendant
See if that works any better than a fair trial

Miners Refuse to Work after Death
Good-for-nothing, lazy so-and-so's!

Something Went Wrong in Jet Crash, Expert Says
No, really? Ya think?

War Dims Hope for Peace
I can see where it might have that effect!

Enfield (London) Couple Slain; Police Suspect Homicide
They may be on to something!

Man Struck By Lightning: Faces Battery Charge
He probably IS the battery charge!

Red Tape Holds Up New Bridges
You mean there's something stronger than duct tape?

New Study of Obesity Looks for Larger Test Group
Weren't they fat enough?

Hospitals are Sued by 7 Foot Doctors
Boy, are they tall!

The newsroom is changing

"A lot of newspapers are closing, newsrooms shrinking, but news still happens and we still need reporters. There is a greater emphasis on good writing and different kinds of writing. Reporters have to know how to write for the Web, HTML, use a digital voice recorder, and digital video camera."

-Eleanor Shelton, Washtenaw Community College

Jobs in Media and Communications:

-from WCC's Fall 2009 Career Focus

"If you're considering a career in broadcast or communications, here's what the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts through the year 2016."

- **Radio and TV Announcers**
- **Reporters and Correspondents**
- **Public Relations Sepecialists**
- **Technical Writers**
- **Writers and Authors**

-THE NEW YORKER, FEBRUARY 23, 2009

"I give up. What's black and white and red all over?"

Plagiarism?

Ypsilanti's first newspaper, *The Ypsilanti Republican*, appeared in 1837 but discontinued 18 months later. *The Sentinel*, Ypsilanti's old-time newspaper, "saw the light in 1844," says Colburn in The Story of Ypsilanti. A tool of the Whig Party and boosting the candidacy of Henry Clay for the Presidency, the paper was soon taken over by Charles Woodruff, no relation to Benjamin Woodruff the founder of Woodruff's Grove/Ypsilanti.

C. Woodruff's mascot on the paper's banner was an owl. Years later, that paper morphed into the *Ypsilanti Press* and was later absorbed by the *Ann Arbor News*.

In the 1920s, a magazine in New York City followed Woodruff's example and borrowed his owl. Some say the character in their logotype is actually Charles Woodruff. Some might disagree.

When *The Depot Town Rag* was founded in 1976, it chose to run a banner (page one masthead) characterizing the rooftops of buildings in the neighborhood.

Ironically, a New Yorker cover from May 6, 1972 shows Ronald Searle's cat napping on the window ledge with the Depot Town façade directly across the street. Let's let our readers do the math. Just who is guilty of plariarism here?

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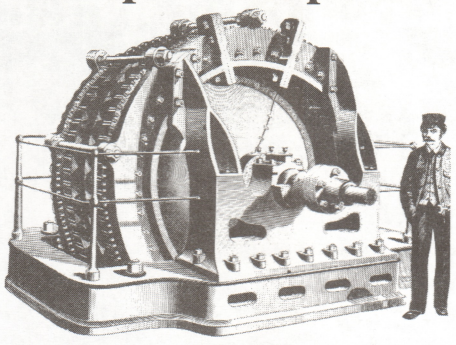
Depot Town's tiny *Rag* just keeps on keepin' on

PRINTERS
THE OLD FASHIONED WAY



Steve Dobrovich operates the huge Heidelberg press at Standard Printing with great authority and masterful aplomb

Standard Printing cranks out copy with traditional ink, paper

This year sees the most advertising/sponsors since its first issue in 1976. DTA past-president Carolyn McKeever has reminded us of the old media adage, "When times are good, you advertise; when times are bad, you advertise more."

Media experts suggest that "hyper dailies" might survive the economic crisis, but few expect to see this little monthly *Depot Town Rag* become a daily publication. Standard Printing would have to forsake all their other customers and Forrest Karnopp, our carrier, would have to drop out of school just like Thomas Alva Edison did when he delivered the Detroit papers on the trains to Port Huron.

In the next *Rag*:

What's historical and how we can prepare for next year's Yesterfest

Depot Town Rag

"All the news that fits, we print"
A monthly publication of
the Depot Town Association, Inc.
The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198
To the editor:
thomasdodd@comcast.net

The Depot Town Association, Inc.

Gary McKeever, President
Merrill Guerra, Vice President
Ruth Ann Jamnick, Treasurer
Sandee French, Scy. & Past President
Website: www.depottown.org
DTA meets at 6:30 p.m on the third Wednesday of each month at Café Luwak, 42 East Cross Street.

It's lonely here

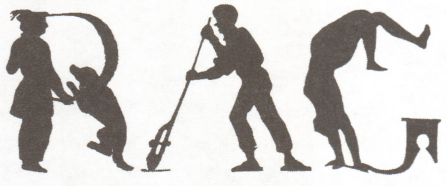
Riley said it: "What a revoltin' development this turned out to be..." -William Bendix on the 1953 sit-com, The Life of Riley

Ancient technology reviewed:

Silhouettes bring back a flavor of our past

[Black and white graphics in The Rag's *Page One banners have included tiny silhouettes over the years. No scissors were used in lifting these elegant views of history; they are lifted electronically with permission from Judy M. Johnson's Old-Time Silhouettes, Dover book #0-486-27940-5.]*

Her publisher notes, "The controller-general of France in 1759, Etienne de Silhouette, was a frugal man who kept himself entertained by cutting portraits in paper. Such work gradually became known as portraits *a la Silhouette*. In the western world, at least, this term stuck, and he left his name to an art form whose tradition stretched as far back as the Tang Dynasty in China (A.D. 618-907) and whose essential principle would, within the next hundred years, provide the basis of photography. These works remain popular for the unique ability to play in simple forms and to show in shadows the hidden drama of the quotidian."



Self-referentialism reaches new depths

When it comes to print media in Ypsi, *The Depot Town Rag* may be all we have left. *The Ypsilanti Citizen* is online: "http://ypsiciti.com/" taking us back to the old days of local reports from *The Ypsilanti Press*.

The Ypsilanti Courier moved to Belleville where it also publishes *The View* as part of the Heritage Newspaper chain, a subsidary of Journal Register Company who may not

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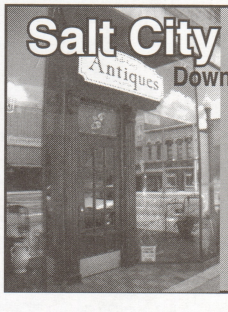

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How will citizens become informed?

Former *Ann Arbor News* editor Ed Petykiewicz on the future of journalism:

"People ask 'Will journalism survive?' and I think it will survive. The way stories are told will be different and the way they are delivered will be different. But it's the journalists who have fairness and objectivity who will be sought out online.

"...I believe we are on a short timeline for the printed newspaper."

Bill Keller, *New York Times* executive editor:

We are losing the kind of journalism that, "however imperfect, labors hard to be trustworthy, to supply you with the information you need to be an engaged citizen."

John Darnton, Pulitzer Prize winning reporter from *The New York Times*:

"Stockholm Sweden's 1689 newspaper, the oldest continuing publication in the world, is going online."

"Brand papers may go to the last man standing: Rupert Murdoch, David Sulzberger, et al."

"Freedom of the press belongs to every individual who owns one."

Breakfaster at Café Luwak:

"TV started out as entertainment in the '40s and '50s, then eased into news by reading front pages of the metro papers to TV viewers. TV is called a "medium" because it's not "well done."

Amy Goodman, acclaimed journalist, author and Democracy Now! host:

"Independent media can go to where the silence is and break the sound barrier, doing what the corporate networks refuse to do . . ."

PEJ (Project for Excellence in Journalism):

"It is time for the daily newspaper as we know it to die," proclaimed former newspaper reporter Sarah Strohmeyer. "I know their time has come to an end... But that's not to say journalism is dead. In fact, I would argue it's more alive than ever. I read 'more news' now than I ever have, repeatedly checking my local newspaper's online edition not only for breaking stories, but also for reaction from the community."

"It is not a death, but a metamorphosis," posits journalist Richard Klicki. "As long as the journalistic integrity and quality of content remains, these new all-digital news sites will not only survive, but hold a much better chance of building new audiences and, following traditional revenue theory, advertisers who believe in more eyes on the site will translate into more traffic."

Depot Town Rag editor at March 2009 Open Classroom Conference:

"Some local school districts punish their students for publishing their own newspapers. No credit is given for writing, proofing, designing, printing, distributing, and financing their own product. Sophomoric humor and embarassing typos bring severe punishment."

"Whatever will we do without our daily newspaper?"
"Looks like we might have to get us one of them new computer gadgets for our news!"

Ann & Dan Arber discuss the local news

John Belushi, on our expectations of the print medium:

"What do you want for a quarter?"

Harry Belafonte:

"If you don't preach to the choir, they may stop singing..."

Eric Alterman, in Save the News, Not the Newspaper, *The Nation*:

"...journalism schools are filled with young people educating themselves for a profession that they are taught is about to become economically obsolete. They aren't there to get rich; they're there in the hopes of offering their fellow citizens what Walter Lippmann, writing in 1930, called 'Liberty and the News.' If history is any guide, you can't have one without the other."

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Proceeds benefit the Farmers' Market and the Friends of the Freighthouse
Open through 7 November, whatever the weather
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Local news we certainly could use

There was always plenty of local news through the years:

1837-8
- *The Ypsilanti Republican*

1844
- *The Ypsilanti Sentinel*
- *The Chronicle*

1864
- *The True Democrat/Commercial*

1887
- *The Ypsilantian*
- *Ypsilanti Evening News* = became the *Ypsilanti Daily Press/ Ypsilanti Press*

1954-1963
- *Ann Arbor News* office in Ypsilanti

1976
- *The Depot Town Rag * (monthly)*

1994
- *Ypsilanti edition of the Ann Arbor News /Community News (daily)*

1994
- *The Ypsilanti Courier * (weekly)*

2008
- *The Ypsilanti Citizen * (YpsiCiti.com)*

** Still publishing*

www.depottown.org

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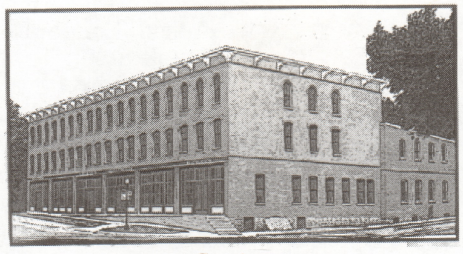
Sample news story in Journalism 101 format

Headline: **Thompson Block renovation project still moving forward**

Sub head: **Investors needed to continue**

Graphic:



Caption:

"Artist's rendering of historic building"

Time line:

21 August 2009, YPSILANTI, MI

Lead line: (What? Why? Where?)

Renovation work continues slowly on the building that was a barracks in the American Civil War. The property has been neglected over the same years the rest of the neighborhood saw great rehabilitation and was the site of legal battles with owner David Kircher. Known as The Thompson Block, it has seen extensive attention while in receivership under control of the City.

The Nut: (Who? What?)

Contractor Stuart Beal gave a status report on renovation of the building at August's DDA meeting describing difficulty with financing while he continues internal and roof work on the property.

Primary source quote: (When?)

"We are looking for investors and if you are interested or know someone who is interested, contact me," said Beal. He is shooting for a September 1, 2010 occupancy date for the sixteen apartments.

Secondary source quote: (So what?)

"This is a very difficult project in very difficult times," said City Councilmember Peter Murdock, "and we all wish it well."

Possible Sidebar:

Another building owned by Kircher behind the Thompson Block at 107 East Cross is slated to be demolished as soon as legalities are satisfied with the Michigan Supreme Court.

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